

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL**

**SUBMISSION FROM PHIL SPRINGTHORPE**

In my opinion the ' Hate-crime and Public Order Bill ' as drafted is cause for concern.

The proposed new offence of 'stirring up hatred' is poorly thought out and prone to being massively misused.

Even the title, 'stirring up of hatred ', is so woolly and ill-defined. In reality it is not defined at all and can easily be transgressed inadvertently, even in ones own home. Threatening and abusive behaviour - which is quite different - is already covered in law.

The proposed bill is as draconian as it is naive. You cannot control people's thoughts. We can't even stop drink driving - which is rational - how is it possible to dictate what people think?

Free speech is vital in a free society. This bill seems to suggest that the Scottish government does not want a free society.

It would even be possible for an MSP to be accused on the basis of something said in the Scottish Parliament.

If it is easily possible in parliament how much more so in a religious, educational or moral setting where free speech and debate are, in effect, banned.

It is a law that is open to a huge number of vexatious complaints and abuse and should be deleted.

Phil Springthorpe  
**21 July 2020**